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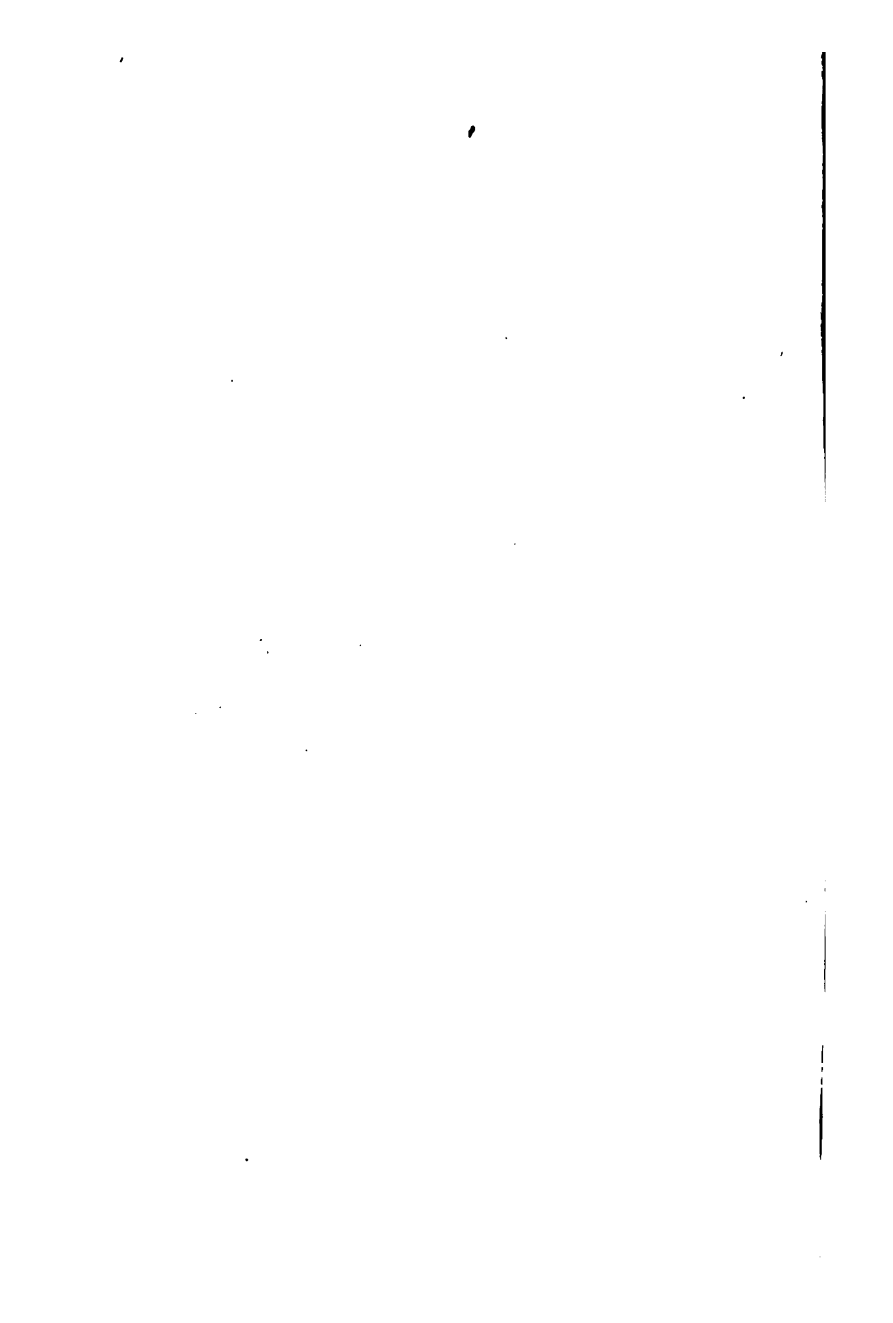
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THE
CRYSTAL HIVE;

OR,

THE FIRST OF MAY,

1851.

BY

C. C. W.



LONDON:
W. H. DALTON, COCKSPUR STREET.
1852.

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THE CRYSTAL HIVE.

EMERGING from the dusky night
With pinions fully plum'd for flight,
The infant year of Fifty-one
Had cheerily its course begun,
When Phœbus, on his stately march
Through the blue heav'n's ethereal arch,
This orb surveying from on high,
A novel object did espy.
As bright the glitt'ring wonder rose
As frost-work 'mid the Polar snows,
But seem'd a thing too frail to last,
Expos'd to every hostile blast,

And being beautiful and rare,
'Twas taken into Phœbus' care ;—
Thus by the kindly guardian Sun,
'Twas cherish'd till its work was done.

The wintry months roll'd swift away,
And rapidly approach'd the May :
The fairy fabric reared on high,
Sparkled beneath the azure sky,
Reflecting all the varying hues
That sunbeams in the Spring diffuse.

But tho' 'twas passing fair to view,
A doubt existed, it is true,
As to the destined end and scope
Of this new favourite of hope.
'Twas thought a vision so sublime
Would ne'er be realized in time :
A thousand obstacles might rise
To hinder it, from earth and skies

If realized, some said, 'twere worse,
 A great and multiplying curse,—
 'Twould bring us feuds, and socialism,
 And many another fatal *ism* !
 In short, "it was a senseless plot,
 Replete with evil," it had—*not*.
 Thus spake the timid spirits all ;
 The braver ones scarce fear'd at all,
 Or said, with him of southern skies,
 "Beset with risks of various size,
 Each glorious palm man fain would boast,
 And he shall ne'er attain the prize
 Who first encounters not the cost." *

The work was done, and nobly done,
 Thanks be to Fox and Henderson !
 Twin candidates for wide renown,
 And worthy each an *iron* crown.

* Metastasio.

Methinks upon the fair design,
 In fabling days of auld lang syne,
 Raptur'd had gaz'd the Tuneful Nine,
 And, smiling, to the artist brought
 (Meet guerdon of poetic thought)
 A wreath of bays in crystal wrought :
 But since in these prosaic days,
 Poets no more are crown'd with bays,
 Our gracious Sovereign, to requite
 The worthy genius, dubb'd him Knight.
 And now, in Chatsworth's stately bow'rs,
 "*Sir Joseph*" Paxton tends the flow'rs !
 But foremost in the list of fame
 Was Royal Albert's honour'd name ;
 Who first propos'd the wond'rous show,—
 Towards him the tide of praise should flow.

Thirty years had pass'd, and more,
 Since clos'd the continental war,

And thirty years of peace had wrought
 A mighty change, as may be thought :
 Beneath the olive's fruitful shade
 A wondrous progress had been made,
 And Britain scarcely seem'd the same,
 Save in her gen'rous hearts, and name.
 But while she had maturer grown,
 Much of simplicity had flown ;
 Her natural beauty was defac'd
 By rigid *lines* all o'er her trac'd,
 And scarce was left a quiet bow'r,
 'Tween John o'Groat's house and the Tow'r.
 But, on the other hand, 'twas said,
 Knowledge had marvellously spread ;
 That Art and Science, hand in hand,
 March'd on triumphant thro' the land ;
 That all her locomotive speed
 Was but proportion'd to her need ;
 That none need now be in the dark—
 Thanks be to steam, and th' electric spark—
 And phrase like that, with sage remark.

Musing, in meditative hours,
 On all these vast unfolding pow'rs—
 On mind's advance, and wealth's increase,
 And all the fruits of smiling Peace,
 And taking from his vantage ground,
 A comprehensive glance around,
 The Prince conceiv'd his giant scheme,
 Invok'd he then the aid of steam,
 And all the energies of man,
 To realize his glorious plan.
 "I will," he said, "an Exhibition :
 Go! execute my great commission."

To East, and West, to South, and North,
 The peaceful challenge sallied forth ;
 And North, and South, and East, and West
 Responded as they each could best ;
 Its various treasures number'd o'er,
 And sent its own peculiar store.
 The genius of the gorgeous East
 Supplied a vast and sumptuous feast ;

The treasures of the winged West'
 Flow'd forth abundant from her breast ;
 The sunny South, from all her bow'rs,
 Cull'd of her art the choicest flow'rs ;
 The sterner spirit of the North
 Sent corresponding offerings forth.
 All these, a heterogeneous store,—
 Came safely to the British shore,
 And ent'ring thro' the shining door,
 Within the Palace' ample space
 Each found its own allotted place.
 Whate'er of beautiful or rare,
 In Art or Nature's gifts, was there ;
 Proud Science, too, her store displayed,
 And Learning lent her various aid.
 Arrang'd along the glitt'ring aisles,
 Were marbles, bronzes, casts,—in files ;
 Models of various size and kind,
 With skill and gracefulness combin'd.

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Tissues and silks of costliest grain,
 All "textile fabrics" in their train,
 And here and there a sumptuous case
 Of feathers, furs, or broider'd lace,
 While lustrous gems of ev'ry hue,
 In rich profusion met the view,
 And many a radiant bird and flow'r
 Were captur'd in this crystal bow'r.
 A fountain, 'mid the central way,
 Gush'd forth, and fell in glist'ning spray,
 And near the fountain's copious flow
 A green and stately elm did grow,
 Which—on the site selected found—
 With shining toils was circl'd round :
 And sculptur'd forms were there, designed
 To please or elevate the mind.
 In short, whichever way you went,
 'Twas pleasure and bewilderment.
 'Twould take a tedious year to tell
 The treasures of each crystal cell :

The splendours of the Indian tent ;
 The ivory spheres by China sent ;
 Of Egypt's scymetars, and dates ;
 Of caps to fit Tunisian pates ;
 Of Turkish coffee, and meershaums,
 And honey from the Grecian swarms ;
 Of Russian gems, and malachite,
 To dazzle the enchanted sight ;
 Of Spanish lace, and marquetrie,
 Her mimic bullfights, too, to see ;
 How Prussia greeted with a *Kiss*,
 And Belgium's store was not amiss ;
 How beasts in comedy were fine
 Within the witty Zolverein ;
 How none in all the world could cope
 With North America in—*soap* !
 I say, 'twere tedious to relate
 The products of each foreign state ;
 Suffice to say, that each did vie
 In skill :—a generous rivalry.

Both France and Italy were rife
 In all that doth embellish life :
 In works of decorative art
 They held the most conspicuous part ;
 And Britain also did supply
 Fair show of plastic energy—
 Her beauteous emulative bow'rs
 Of finely moulded waxen flow'rs,
 Her chisel's trac'ry, her silver wrought
 In graceful forms of Fancy taught ;
 All proving her elastic thought,
 Her fine manipulative skill,
 And progress up the Phocian hill.

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But Britain chiefly bends her mind
 To labours of the useful kind :
 Her rich provision for the poor
 Is *her* chief boast, *her—Koh-i-noor* !
 Long as the eager world consumes
 The produce of her busy looms ;

Long as her fam'd machinery
 The wants of millions doth supply,
 So long, with blessing from above,
 Shall Britain's star ascendant prove.

And now 'twas come, th' appointed day,
 The memorable first of May!
 And, as the welcome hour drew nigh,
 The loyal Sun shone gloriously!
 He shone upon each spire and tow'r,
 He lighted up each vernal bow'r,
 And brighten'd with his golden rays
 The subject of my humble lays;
 While ev'ry banner rear'd on high,
 In sign of peaceful rivalry,
 Wav'd in the blue and breezy sky.
 And on the crisped air, that morn,
 Gay peals of merry bells were borne—
 Each tow'r and steeple lent its voice,
 Bidding each British heart rejoice.

Almost since fled away the dark
 Had myriads throng'd the cheerful Park ;
 This eager multitude among,
 Were men of ev'ry clime and tongue ;
 And when approach'd the Royal Pair,
 One shout of welcome rent the air.
 This shout was echoed from within
 With joyous bursts,—“God save the Queen !”
 Blent with the trumpet's thrilling blast,
 When thro' that structure's opening vast
 She with her Royal partner past.

A moment more—Britannia's Queen
 High on her chair of state was seen ;
 Her golden sceptre of command
 She bore not in her gracious hand,
 But, on her brow a diadem
 Of fam'd Golconda's sparkling gem,
 And circling round her, as a zone,
 Were loyal hearts all linked in one.

The Prince of Wales, and eldest born
 The steps about the throne adorn ;
 (A hundred skilful hands had trac'd
 The broid'ry that the daïs grac'd)
 Above, an azure canopy
 With snowy plumes and blazonry,
 And fragrant plants from foreign bow'rs
 Expanded wide their glorious flow'rs,
 While the clear fountain strew'd around
 Its gem-like drops with chiming sound.
 Above, below, on either hand,
 'Twas less like truth than fairy land,
 And, glitt'ring in the sun's gay beam,
 Resembled an *arrested dream*.

But lo ! a solemn silence there !
 That vast assemblage hush'd in prayer !
 The good Archbishop's voice alone
 Was heard in supplicating tone :

He pray'd to Him who reigns on high,
 To bless the work, and sanctify ;
 To quell the swelling waves of pride,
 And grant that peace might long abide ;
 For grace to use His gifts aright,
 To His sole glory, and His might :
 And twenty thousand hearts, as *one*,
 Bow'd down before the unseen throne.

The prayer was o'er—a hymn of praise
 The pealing organs then did raise :
 “ A solemn sea-like ” tide of song
 Majestically roll'd along ;
 Yet reach'd not to the utmost bound,
 Of that vast fabric glitt'ring round.

The music ceas'd,—and need I tell
 What office then to Albert fell ?
 Enough to say the Prince's scheme
 Was well unfolded in his theme :
 Detail'd he all his glorious plan
 To spur the industry of man ;

T' ensure that due reward be giv'n,
 And Justice hold her balance ev'n.
 The Queen's reply, succinct and clear,
 Fell softly on each list'ning ear.

Then rose she from th' inaug'ral chair,
 And thro' the throng the Royal Pair,
 And youthful scions of the tree,
 Moved on with stately courtesie ;
 And all their bright attendant train
 In gay procession form'd again.
 Statesman, hero, patriot, sage—
 The pride and flower of the age,
 A warrior Duke,—a Mandarin
 (Celestial orb in transit seen),
 A Granville, Russell, and a Grey ;
 Peeress and peer, in bright array.
 All these,—the beautiful, the brave,
 Swept proudly thro' the glorious nave,
 And 'mid the transept's sunny sheen,
 Attendant on the lovely Queen :

And she, of that bright galaxy
 The central star ordain'd to be,
 By virtue's strong attractive pow'r,
 All hearts drew towards her in that hour.
 The loyal crowds on either side
 Contemplate her with joy and pride.

Too swiftly pass'd the pageant by
 To satisfy each eager eye;
 But 'tis not lost to memory.
 Still pictur'd to the mental sight,
 In colours both distinct and bright,
 And each successive scene we find
 Daguerr'otyp'd upon the mind.

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The opening o'er—'twas scarce believed
 Such peaceful triumph was achieved:
 And could it safely be averr'd
 That no dire accident occur'd?
 In truth it was a wondrous fact!
 And justified the vent'rous act.

But he who best himself doth school,
 Obeyeth best external rule.
 The triumph of the great event
 Prov'd Englishmen's self-government.

Full many another pleasant hour
 Explor'd the Queen our fairy bow'r,
 And all the sunny summer long
 Its shining glades did myriads throng.
 A hundred thousand, yea, and more,
 Travers'd one day the palace floor;
 And yet its lucid walls appear'd,
 As slight as tho' by fairies rear'd;
 Such triumph, then, had human skill,
 Subservient to th' Almighty Will.

Six months of pleasure fled away,
 Swift as a summer holiday.
 October came,—as first proposed,
 The wond'rous Exhibition closed.

Of all its treasures 'twas bereft :
Nought but the shining fabric left.

Whether again that crystal hive
With *human* BEES shall seem alive,
And marble forms once more be seen,
Glist'ning 'mid groves of evergreen ;
Or, swept away,—the forest tree
Its sole memorial shall be,
Remaineth yet a mystery :
Meanwhile, its noble purpose wrought,
'Tis now a theme for grateful thought ;
And this with truth may be averr'd,
That faithful Phœbus kept his word ;
For ne'er a brighter summer pass'd,
Nor pleasanter than was the last !

But who may now the problem solve,
Why all these novel pow'rs evolve ?
Ah ! what the object, what the end ?
And whither do man's efforts tend ?

What gracious purpose may there be
 Beyond the one which all may see,
 Impelling him o'er land and sea
 With speed which centuries of thought
 Had scarcely dream'd of—never taught.
 Linking, by unseen agency,
 Extended thro' the pathless sea,
 The thoughts and purposes of those
 Between whose shores an ocean flows ;
 Imparting to the clouded sight
 Of minds where lingered still the night,
 The cheering, vivifying light !
 O thou,* who on the starry sky
 So oft didst gaze with steadfast eye,

* It was calculated by Sir Isaac Newton, upwards of a century and a half ago, that in order to the fulfilment of prophecy within the appointed time, an increase of locomotive speed would be required, exactly commensurate with that which has been actually attained during the last thirty years.

Who yet more reverently did scan
 The wondrous words of God to man,
 The right direction, and the scope
 Of mortal energy, and hope :
 O bright in mind, and pure in heart,
 Could'st thou, from where in peace thou art,
 Thy converse with this orb renew,
 And find thy calculations true,
 What joy, methinks, were surely thine,
 Thus to have read the Voice Divine.

Yea, all these powers do but fulfil
 The fiat of th' Almighty Will:
 Thro' them all nations shall be sought,
 Within the blessed fold be brought,
 And men of every tongue and clime
 Be gather'd in th' *appointed* time.

Then hail we all the means that tend
 To realize this glorious end.
 Hail ! pow'rs of Steam, and of the Press,
 Your benefits let all confess.

Hail ! subtle Electricity !
 Pervading all the earth and sky ;
 In closer bonds the nations tie !

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And ye, unconscious artisans,
 Fulfilling heaven's ulterior plans,
 Blind instruments be ye no more,
 But God's high purposes adore !
 May each, according to his power,
 Accelerate the blissful hour !

May Britain lead the glorious way,
 And indicate that brighter day,
 When truth shall bear triumphant sway ;
 When strife o'er all the world shall cease,
 And in its place shall smile Celestial Peace.

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